

In the United States Court of Federal Claims
OFFICE OF SPECIAL MASTERS
Filed: August 20, 2024

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CHEREEDOWDELL, * UNPUBLISHED

Petitioner, * No. 18-1514V

v. * Special Master Dorsey

SECRETARY OF HEALTH * Attorneys' Fees and Costs.
AND HUMAN SERVICES,
* * * * *

Respondent. * * * * *

Howard Scott Gold, Gold Law Firm, Wellesley, MA, for Petitioner.
Jamica Marie Littles, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC, for Respondent.

AMENDED DECISION AWARDING ATTORNEYS' FEES AND COSTS¹

On September 28, 2018, Cheree Dowdell (“Petitioner”) filed a petition in the National Vaccine Injury Program² alleging that as a result of the influenza (“flu”) vaccine administered on October 9, 2015, she suffered lichen planus pigmentosus (“LPP”) and dermatosis. Petition at Preamble (ECF No. 1). On October 2, 2023, the undersigned issued a Decision Based on Stipulation, awarding Petitioner compensation. Decision Based on Stipulation dated Oct. 2, 2023 (ECF No. 109).

¹ Because this unpublished Decision contains a reasoned explanation for the action in this case, the undersigned is required to post it on the United States Court of Federal Claims’ website and/or at <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/uscourts/national/cofc> in accordance with the E-Government Act of 2002. 44 U.S.C. § 3501 note (2018) (Federal Management and Promotion of Electronic Government Services). **This means the Decision will be available to anyone with access to the Internet.** In accordance with Vaccine Rule 18(b), Petitioner has 14 days to identify and move to redact medical or other information, the disclosure of which would constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy. If, upon review, the undersigned agrees that the identified material fits within this definition, the undersigned will redact such material from public access.

² The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program is set forth in Part 2 of the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986, Pub. L. No. 99-660, 100 Stat. 3755, codified as amended, 42 U.S.C. §§ 300aa-10 to -34 (2018) (“Vaccine Act” or “the Act”). All citations in this Decision to individual sections of the Vaccine Act are to 42 U.S.C.A. § 300aa.

On April 4, 2024, Petitioner filed an application for attorneys' fees and costs. Petitioner's Motion for Final Attorneys' Fees and Costs ("Pet. Mot."), filed Apr. 4, 2024 (ECF No. 114). Petitioner requests compensation in the amount of \$43,336.96, representing \$31,119.71 in attorneys' fees and \$12,217.25 in costs. *Id.* at 1, 12-13. Pursuant to General Order No. 9, Petitioner warrants that she has not personally incurred any costs in pursuit of her claim for compensation. *Id.* at 1. Respondent filed a response on April 15, 2024 stating he "is satisfied the statutory requirements for an award of attorneys' fees and costs are met in this case." Respondent's Response to Pet. Mot., filed Apr. 15, 2024, at 2 (ECF No. 115). The matter is now ripe for disposition.³

Petitioner requests the following hourly rates for the work of her counsel: for Mr. Howard Gold, \$380.00 per hour for work performed in 2017, \$390.00 per hour for work performed in 2018, \$400.00 per hour for work performed in 2019, \$410.00 per hour for work performed in 2020, \$422.00 per hour for work performed in 2021, \$434.00 per hour for work performed in 2022, and \$447.00 per hour for work performed in 2023.

The undersigned finds the rates are consistent with what counsel has previously been awarded for his Vaccine Program work, and finds them to be reasonable herein. The undersigned has reviewed the submitted billing entries and finds the total number of hours billed to be reasonable and will award them in full. Lastly, the undersigned has reviewed the requested costs and finds them to be reasonable and supported with appropriate documentation. Accordingly, the full amount of costs shall be awarded.

Therefore, the undersigned finds no cause to reduce the requested hours or rates, or the requested costs.

The Vaccine Act permits an award of reasonable attorneys' fees and costs. § 15(e). Based on the reasonableness of Petitioner's request, the undersigned **GRANTS** Petitioner's motion for attorneys' fees and costs.

Accordingly, the undersigned awards:

A lump sum in the amount of \$43,336.96, representing reimbursement for reasonable attorneys' fees and costs, in the form of a check payable jointly to Petitioner and Petitioner's counsel of record, Mr. Howard Gold. Petitioner also requests that the award for attorney's fees and costs be forwarded to Gold Law Firm, LLC, One Hollis Street, Suite 220, Wellesley, MA 02482.

³ A decision awarding fees and costs initially issued on July 29, 2024, and judgment entered on July 30, 2024. Decision dated July 29, 2024 (ECF No. 116); Judgment dated July 30, 2024 (ECF No. 118). On August 19, 2024, Petitioner filed an unopposed motion to amend the final fees judgment in this matter to revise the mailing address of Petitioner's counsel. Pet. Mot. to Amend, filed Aug. 19, 2024 (ECF No. 119). On August 20, 2024, the undersigned granted the motion. Order dated Aug. 20, 2024 (ECF No. 120).

In the absence of a motion for review filed pursuant to RCFC Appendix B, the Clerk of Court **SHALL ENTER JUDGMENT** in accordance with this Decision.⁴

IT IS SO ORDERED.

/s/ Nora Beth Dorsey

Nora Beth Dorsey
Special Master

⁴ Pursuant to Vaccine Rule 11(a), entry of judgment is expedited by the parties' joint filing of notice renouncing the right to seek review.